

## Get Children Involved In Disaster Planning: It Helps Calm Their Fears



ATLANTA, Ga. -- When family life is disrupted by a natural disaster, children often feel vulnerable or just plain scared. Well-thought out plans that involve them in pre-disaster and post-disaster activities can help calm their fears. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) web site, "FEMA for KIDS," is designed for children; it has fun quizzes and games. At the same time, the site helps families prepare for a disaster.

One of the most important first steps is to have children help stock a Disaster Supply Kit. They can help decide what should go in the kit and why, and help choose how it will be stored and where. The FEMA for KIDS web site explains the kit's contents and provides materials in a format kids will enjoy while they are learning.

"Parents will be delighted at the non threatening way disaster information is provided on the FEMA for KIDS web site," said Nick Russo, federal coordinating officer. "We invite parents to check the site and to order and use the posters, videos and other items for children offered there. The materials are free." The toll free number to call is 1-800-480-2520.

Many things can be done with children to protect the home and family before a disaster strikes. Here are some suggestions:

Listen together for weather updates and stay in touch with neighbors about ways to evacuate if the order is given;

- \* Practice evacuation drills.
- \* Discuss where the family will gather if separated during a disaster.
- \* Decide on an out of state relative or friend who family members can call to let others know they are safe.
- \* Stock up on water and canned foods.
- \* If the child is old enough, practice shutting off utilities together.
- \* Compile a list of "pet-friendly" places to leave the family pet if it becomes necessary.
- \* Practice with pets when doing evacuation drills; have children put identifying collars on pets.
- \* Teach children basic first aid steps, like applying bandages.

These are just some of the topics a family will find on the FEMA for KIDS web site. When a disaster threatens, pre-planning with a parent or guardian can be important in helping diminish a child's fears.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

<http://www.fema.com/>